COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year. This issue covers the months of April and May 2004.

Study shows Ontario university graduates enjoy high employment rates

For the sixth consecutive year, results of the Ontario University Graduate Survey show that Ontario university graduates continue to enjoy high employment rates. The 2003-2004 survey was mailed to those individuals who graduated in 2001 from undergraduate university programs in Ontario six months and two years after graduation. For 2001 graduates, the overall employment rate was 95.8% two years after graduation, and 93.6% six months out. Average salary levels were, respectively, $43,296 and $37,789, two years and six months after graduation.

The survey was conducted by the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) on behalf of COU under a contract with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Of the 45,798 graduates who were surveyed, 13,125 or 28.7% responded.

Results of the survey can be found on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca). In the coming weeks, all Ontario universities are expected to post their respective survey results on their individual web sites.

Over 72,000 secondary school students apply to an Ontario university

As of the end of March, approximately 72,300 Ontario secondary school students have applied for fall 2004 admission to a university in the province, filing a total of 358,000 application choices with the universities.

Also as of the end of March, the number of non-secondary school applicants seeking admission to an Ontario university grew to approximately 38,000 – an increase of about 20% over last year. An upsurge in the number of applicants who elected not to attend university after completing high school in Ontario during the double cohort year accounted for part of the growth in this applicant group, which also includes mature students, transfer students from colleges and universities, and applicants from outside Ontario.

There was also about a 12% growth in the number of applicants seeking admission as transfer students with advanced standing credit, with OUAC processing approximately 14,000 applicants. The Centre will continue to receive and process new applications from these groups throughout the spring and summer months.

In 2003, the number of secondary school applicants for admission to an Ontario university totalled approximately 102,000. Last year's record breaking number was due in large part to the first wave of double cohort students (graduates from the former and the new secondary school curriculum) seeking admission to university at the same time.

Tuition freeze, postsecondary education review announced

On April 8, 2004, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Mary Anne Chambers confirmed that the McGuinty government will freeze college and university tuition, effective immediately. The freeze will cover both regulated and deregulated programs. To offset loss of revenues, the government will provide $41.7 million in partial funding to universities for the first year of the freeze.

Minister Chambers also announced that the government will launch a comprehensive review of postsecondary education in the province, to begin this summer and conclude this fall.

"We are confident that the review will point to the need for further investment to ensure that students have access to excellence at strong universities," says Dr. Richard Van Loon, Chair of the Council of Ontario Universities and President of Carleton University.

Industry Canada, federal research funding agencies represented at annual OCUR meeting

On April 1, 2004, the Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR) held its annual meeting in Ottawa to consult with government officials and the heads of the major federal research funding agencies. Government guests were Jean-Claude Villard, Deputy Minister, Industry Canada; Tim Stupich, Manager, Science Policy, Industry Canada; and Dr. Tim McTiernan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. The federal research funding agencies were represented by Janet Halliwell, Executive Vice-President, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; Carmen Charette, Interim President, Canada Foundation for Innovation; and Dr. Mark Bisby, Vice-President, Research, Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Dialogue with Industry Canada focused on the innovation agenda for Canada, the federal government's plans to continue to enhance support for research and the role of the newly appointed Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, Dr. Arthur Carty. Discussions with representatives of funding agencies were centered on the respective agency's priorities and future prospects for continued growth of research funding.

University research success stories published

The Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR), in association with COU, recently published *A Sampling of Success Stories of Federal and Provincial Investment in University Research*. This compilation illustrates the wide range of research underway at Ontario universities that is supported by federal programs such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Canada Research Chairs, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Networks of Centres of Excellence, and by provincial programs such as the Ontario Innovation Trust, the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund, the Premier's Research Excellence Awards and the Ontario Centres of Excellence.

Representing all of Ontario's publicly funded universities across the disciplines, the sampling of stories demonstrates how university research not only plays an essential role in advancing knowledge and both Ontario's and Canada's economic, social and culture development, but also contributes immeasurably to improving the quality of life and health of our citizens.

The 2004 *Success Stories*, along with the 2002 and 2003 editions, can be found on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca). Also available on the web site is OCUR's position paper, *A University Research Strategy for Ontario*. Published in November 2003, the paper outlines OCUR's recommendations on the types of funding programs that will help strengthen research performance, increase research effectiveness and make best use of funds from a variety of funding programs.

Public policy specialists present to Quality and Financing Task Force

On March 19, 2004, three professionals who are helping to shape Ontario's and Canada's public policy deliberations on postsecondary education financing and student financial assistance presented to COU's Quality and Financing Task Force.

Jim Milway, Executive Director of Ontario's Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, gave an informative review of the Institute's findings on Ontario's prosperity gap and the under-investment in university education in Ontario compared to 14 competitor states.

Dr. Ross Finnie, Research Fellow and Adjunct Professor at the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University and Visiting Fellow at Statistics Canada, and Alex Usher, Vice-President of Educational Policy Institute, are co-authors with Hans Vossensteyn of the paper, *Meeting the Need: A New Architecture for Canada's Student Financial Aid System*, which Dr. Finnie presented at the Higher Education in Canada conference held at Queen's University this past February. The "new architecture" proposes ways to re-focus federal and provincial investment in student financial assistance to help ensure that every qualified person has the financial means to pursue postsecondary education without suffering undue financial hardship.

In addition to these presentations, Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum, Principal of McGill University, provided an update on the consultation currently underway in Quebec on university financing and tuition fees.

The Task Force's deliberations will help to shape COU's recommendations on the optimum funding and student financing system in the upcoming provincial consultation on postsecondary education financing.

Web usage increases, paper applications decrease at OUAC

OUAC continues to promote the use of the web for submitting applications to Ontario universities and, as a result, is significantly reducing paper applications. Preliminary statistics for the professional divisions for fall 2004 admission show that applying online was the method of choice for 99.8% of medical applicants, 99.3% of rehabilitation sciences applicants, 98.8% of teacher education applicants and 94.5% of law applicants. In the undergraduate programs, 96.8% of secondary school students, 92% of non-secondary domestic and 93.3% of the non-secondary international applicants used the web to apply.

These statistics and government programs such as Stewardship Ontario (www.stewardshipontario.ca) have added momentum to OUAC's ongoing efforts in evaluating its hard copy/paper applications in all of its processes and in reducing hard copy publications. In the non-secondary domestic division, for example, the Centre printed 225,000 forms in 2003; this year, 110,000 forms were printed, and next year the print total is expected to be reduced by a further 50%. Additional reductions in paper production are planned in the secondary division.

COU meets with Shanghai Higher Education Delegation

On April 8, 2004, representatives of COU, as well as the University of Toronto and York University, met with six members of the Shanghai Higher Education Delegation, organized by the Shanghai Association of Higher Education as part of a North American visit to study Canadian and U.S. higher education development systems. Members of the delegation were given an overview of regulation and policy, administration and management, undergraduate and graduate program evaluation, international programs and key issues such as quality and financing, mandatory retirement and tuition freeze.

OPAS launches 2004 teaching with technology awards program

Nominations are now open for the 2004 Awards for Excellence in Teaching with Technology, sponsored by the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS). The awards recognize university faculty who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in using technology to enhance and improve their teaching.

Two awards are available. The first, sponsored by CGI Group Inc., recognizes a program, course or module designed for university students, at either the undergraduate or graduate level. The second, sponsored by IBM Canada, recognizes a learning product designed specifically for people in the workforce. Each award is valued at $7,500.

Nominations may be submitted electronically through the OPAS web site (www.opas-partnerships.com) and must be received by June 21, 2004. Winners will be announced in late August and recognized at a special awards luncheon in October at the University Club in Toronto.

"New look" for online college-university transfer guide

The Ontario College-University Transfer Guide (OCUTG) – an online, interactive database of Ontario's college-university transfer agreements – has a new look that is also more user-friendly. The Guide, which can be found at www.ocutg.on.ca and is a project of the College-University Consortium Council, now includes 214 transfer agreements (174 college-to-university and 40 university-to-college). In addition, plans are underway for a new reporting feature, ideal for researchers, that will generate reports on total numbers of agreements across a range of categories such as type of agreement or institutional partner.

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